



# The Environment Department



The Environment Department leads on the following main areas:

- **Planning and Building Control**
- **Public Protection**
- **Transportation and the Countryside**

Together with the day to day work outlined below, this Department leads on the following priority projects:

- **Public Protection Capacity – (Improvement Priority 7)**
- **Climate Change Action Plan – (Improvement Priority 8)**

Naturally, the Covid-19 crisis and the restrictions pertaining to it have had a considerable impact on all the department's services, with many e.g. our **Public Protection** services undertaking quite different work to the norm, and this under pressure. We have established a completely new service, the **Test, Trace and Protect Service**, and we have had to find different solutions to ensure that we can continue to provide other services. All of this has had an impact on the usual way the department is run, and on our priorities during 2020/21. The challenge of restoring and stabilising will face us during 2021/22, and we will use the lessons that have arisen from the crisis when considering the shape of our future services.

## Planning and Building Control

- **Planning Service**
- **Joint Planning Policy Service, (Gwynedd and Anglesey)**
- **Building Control Service**

### Planning Service

The purpose of this service is to facilitate and manage sustainable developments for the benefit of our communities, the economy and the environment within the Gwynedd planning authority area (which does not include the National Park area).

During 2019/20, over 1,000 general planning enquiries / pre-application enquiries were received. We make decisions on **planning applications** to develop land and deal with approximately 1,100 planning applications annually and, on average, over 91% of applications are granted permission. On average, it takes 68 days to determine applications, with approximately 86% determined within the required time-frame.



Percentage of customers stating that they were satisfied with the level of service

We take **enforcement measures** against developments that have not received planning permission and we deal with approximately 210 cases every year. We investigated 60% of the enforcement cases within 84 days and several enforcement notices were issued.

We deal with all types of developments such as housing (including affordable housing), new schools, factories and substantial infrastructure developments such as National Grid plans.

## Joint Planning Policy Service, (Gwynedd and Anglesey)

**The purpose of this service is to prepare planning policy documents, including preparing and monitoring the Joint Local Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance. The Local Development Plan promotes sustainable development and includes maps and written policies used to determine planning applications.**

Since adopting the **Joint Local Development Plan** (Gwynedd and Anglesey), 8 (of a series of 17) Supplementary Planning Guidance documents have been adopted and another 2 have been subject to public consultation. The guidance add details to the planning policies, and strengthen the Development Plan's ability to provide a firm foundation to make decisions on planning applications in the future. A draft Annual Monitoring Report has been prepared for 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020 and has been discussed with Cabinet Members. The service will need to submit a report pertaining to a 2-year period in October 2021 as it was not necessary to report in 2020. The draft Annual Monitoring Report's conclusion was that the plan delivered the strategy and that the plan's policies worked.

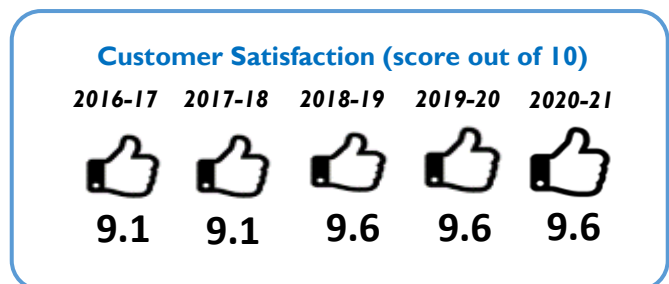
Guidance is also given on planning policy matters to the Gwynedd Planning Authority, the Isle of Anglesey County Council Planning Authority and to external organisations and the public.

As a result of Legislation that will come into force in 2021 to create a Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) for the north Wales region (and the other regions), there will be a statutory requirement to prepare a Strategic Development Plan for the region. The Council will be expected to contribute towards any costs of creating a New Unit that will be responsible for preparing the Strategic Development Plan, at a time when the Service will need to prepare a Revised or New Local Development Plan.

## Building Control Service

**The purpose of this service is to ensure the required standards to secure the health and safety of people around buildings while improving fuel and power conservation, protecting and improving the environment and promoting sustainable development. We also ensure that access and essential facilities are provided for the disabled in new buildings and as part of adaptations.**

Building work must be completed in accordance with the specific requirements of Building



Regulations. This is important and valuable to the people of Gwynedd, as it will ensure that any building work is safe and is of the required standard.

In terms of dangerous structures and buildings, we offer a 24-hour service to ensure that the health and safety of Gwynedd residents is protected.

For Full Building Control applications, the service aims to inspect the plans within 15 working days, with the decision being released as soon as possible, and offers close joint working with builders and architects to attain a good standard of application.

Following the Ffordd Gwynedd review, the Service is focusing on trying to deliver the purpose of ensuring that building work is undertaken in accordance with the appropriate requirements, with regulations being enforced where there is justification, to safeguard the health and safety of residents and the environment. This also entails that the Service is revisiting the model for funding the day-to-day work, by also inputting into the changes that are under way nationally with the Building Control system.

## Public Protection

- **Pollution Control and Licensing Service**
- **Food and Safety Service**
- **Trading Standards Service**
- **Tracing Service [part of the Covid-19 Test, Trace, Protect system]**

The general purpose of these services is to protect the public in relation to a range of environmental and health matters.

### Pollution Control and Licensing Service



The purpose of this service is to ensure that businesses or individuals do not pollute the air, the land, or waters with undesirable substances or noise by investigating and responding to complaints about pollution and statutory nuisance.







We assess the safety of private drinking water supplies and enforce improvements as required - 536 drinking water samples were assessed over the past year. We also investigate and monitor **industrial processes** on 49 sites and regulate industrial airborne emissions (oil waste burners, mobile crushers, cement machinery).

We also organise funerals in cases where there are no family members - we had 14 cases during the past year.

We license the following fields in order to protect the users, businesses and the communities of Gwynedd from any detrimental impacts; and take enforcement measures where required to keep users of licensed services safe.

Enforcing Licences	
 1,001 Alcohol Premises	 66 Gambling Premises

- Alcohol and entertainment licensing (including events) and gambling.
- Animal permits including pet shops, riding establishments and dog breeding establishments.
- Taxi vehicles, drivers and operators.
- Caravan sites and scrap metal dealer licences.

 301 Vehicles and 503 Taxi Drivers	 35 Animal Permits
 477 Caravan sites	 26 Scrap Metal Dealers

## Food and Safety Service

The purpose of this service is to:

- **Ensure that food and drink sold that is manufactured, stored, distributed, treated or used in the Gwynedd, is free of any risk to the health and safety of the consumer and is in compliance with constitutional and labelling requirements**
- **Prevent deaths, injuries and conditions that are associated with workplaces**
- **Protect residents and visitors to Gwynedd against infectious diseases and harmful chemicals.**
- **Assist Gwynedd businesses to meet with the required statutory requirements.**

To realise our purpose we educate individuals and businesses, and hold inspection programmes, sample foods and undertake research. We also undertake reactive interventions as required. The service contributes to supporting the local economy by assisting businesses to comply with regulations and deal with businesses who choose not to, in order that they do not have an advantage over legal businesses and cause a risk to public health. Our work assists the Council to realise our well-being objectives to ensure that Gwynedd is a healthy, safe and sustainable place to live and work.

### Monitoring 2019-20



Over 2,100 food businesses



200 Food samples



70 accidents and safety complaints



93.23% of food businesses with a score of 3 (satisfactory) or higher



Over 40 educational visits



Visit 2,000+ businesses annually

### Requests for Service



745  
Food safety



125  
Health and Safety



320  
Infectious Diseases

## Trading Standards Service

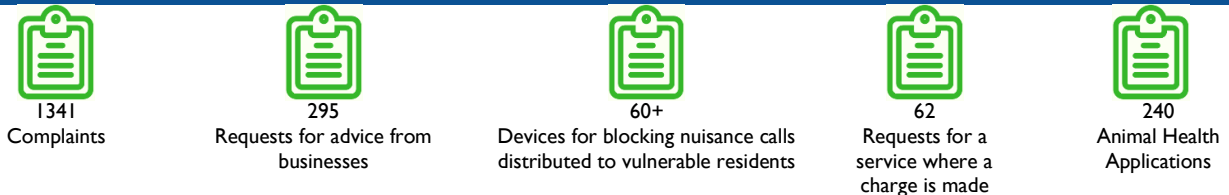
The purpose of this service is to promote, support and ensure a fair and equitable environment while protecting the interests of Gwynedd residents and businesses.

We are responsible for enforcing a wide range of legislation involving the supply and distribution of goods and services and deal with a variety of subjects, including:

- safety of goods
- raising awareness of scams and illegal money lending
- doorstep crimes
- sale of goods with age restrictions
- business advice
- fake goods and crimes and intellectual property rights
- e-commerce and internet investigations
- estate agents legislation and property descriptions
- petroleum and explosives/fireworks
- animal health and welfare
- animal feed
- weights and measures



## REQUESTS FOR SERVICE 2019/2020



The core duties of Public Protection Services have been limited to high risk matters and efforts to continue to provide core services, as the response to the pandemic continues to take priority in 2021.

## The Test, Trace and Protect Service (New Service)

The Test, Trace and Protect service (TTP) was established in May 2020 and came into operation on 1 June 2020. By now the service employs 103 workers.

The aims of the Test, Trace and Protect Services in Gwynedd are:

- Reduce the spread of Covid-19 across our communities by supporting people infected with the virus to isolate during their infectious period
- Identify the people who have been in contact with a positive case of Covid-19 and support them to isolate until the symptoms or the incubation period has elapsed

- Support people with symptoms to get access to a Covid-19 test
- Work with specialist partners in the risk management area to control any risks for people who are isolating together with wider communities and businesses in Gwynedd.

Since June 2020, TTP in Gwynedd has responded to:

- 8,049 cases of Covid-19 in Gwynedd (between 01/06/20-31/12/20)
- 1,420 cases (Index cases) of Covid-19 have been identified (between 01/06/20-31/12/20)
- 6,513 contacts to Index Cases were created.

On average, in Gwynedd each positive Index Case has 4.67 contacts.

In addition to dealing with cases in Gwynedd, we undertake some significant work on behalf of other local authorities across Wales - this is called joint support. Since 1 June 2020, we have provided the following support throughout Wales to other local authorities:

- Approximately 550 positive Covid-19 cases
- Approximately 370 contacts to positive cases

The flexibility of the TTP model enables us to be more resilient throughout the whole of Wales, to reduce the spread of the virus and ensure that we make the best use of public funding, this will continue in 2021.

## Transportation and the Countryside

- **Parking and Street Care Service**
- **Traffic and Projects Service**
- **Integrated Transport and Road Safety Service**
- **Countryside and Access Service**

**It is noted that establishing a Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) for north Wales can also impact on transportation services as it will be one of the duties of the CJC to deal with preparing the Regional Transportation Plan. The Council will be expected to contribute towards any costs to create a new unit that will be responsible for preparing the Regional Transportation Plan.**

### Parking and Street Works Service

At the turn of this year, an opportunity was identified to improve efficiency and effectiveness by merging the Parking and Street Works units because of the synergy between the responsibilities and activities of the teams. A new service was formed within the Environment Department, namely the Parking and Street Works Service.

**The purpose of the service is to ensure that the county network is safe and unrestricted, to facilitate the flow of traffic and ensure there are appropriate parking places for all.**

We satisfy this purpose by delivering the following aspects:

- ensuring there is no unnecessary barrier to the use of the highway as a result of activities and events, through coordinating and appropriate control
- parking enforcement on and off our streets
- maintaining our car parks and ensure their safety
- maintaining our pay and display machines.

We are responsible for coordinating and monitoring all the activities carried out on the public highway network by statutory contractors (e.g. Welsh Water, BT) or their contractors. We also **licence the siting of skips and scaffolding** on our roads as well as enforcing property owners to fell trees, move obstructions off the road and so on.

A **Parking Task Group** was formed in 2019 to conduct a review of the Council's current parking strategy as a great deal had changed since the Council conducted the last review in 2015. In addition, this year has exacerbated the problems in terms of parking, such as the lack of parking spaces throughout the county, as a result of the fact that the majority of people have remained in the UK rather than venturing overseas on holiday as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. This has certainly highlighted the need for additional powers to deal with vehicles that cause an obstruction and better control of motorhomes. There is now an opportunity to review the current arrangements and recommend improvements to arrive at appropriate and practical solutions.

Concerns had been highlighted in the Ogwen Valley area about the lack of parking for residents and workers in the area. Despite the intention to continue to monitor the situation there, due to the Covid-19 crisis monitoring had to be significantly reduced during 2020/21 but we will resume this work once the situation improves.

## **Traffic and Projects Service**

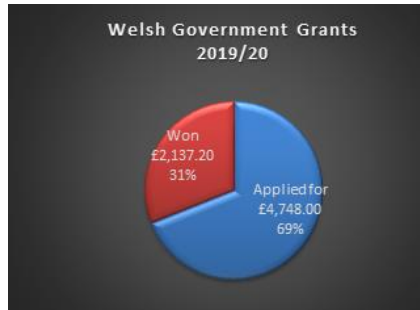
**The purpose of this service is to enable the public to use Gwynedd roads in a safe and unobstructed way.**

We satisfy this purpose by delivering the following main activities:

- ensuring that our roads are safe and unobstructed for every user and offer appropriate measures to monitor and improve them
- complying with our duties under the Active Travel Act 2013 by providing a network of footpaths and cycle tracks and promote active travel

- delivering projects dealing with road safety, improving the network and integrated and sustainable transport in a cost effective, timely and safe way
- ensuring that new developments that impact our roads network have been designed and implemented safely.

We also manage various road improvement projects across the county and we are always looking for opportunities to fund our transportation and safety schemes from external sources.

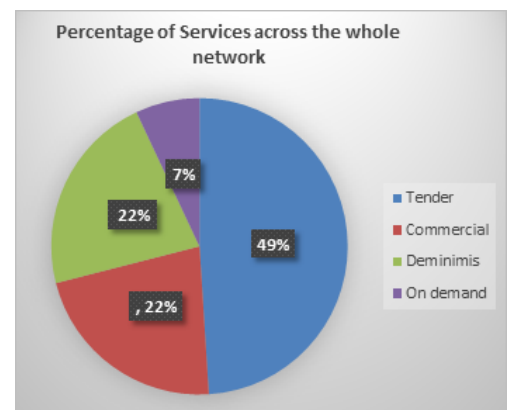


## Integrated Transport and Road Safety Service

The purpose of the transport service is to provide safe, quality and cost-effective transport for Gwynedd residents. To this end, the unit is responsible for all matters relating to transporting Gwynedd residents, be it public transport, transporting learners to educational establishments, community transport or transport for social services.

Over half the **public transport routes** in Gwynedd receive financial support to run them as they are not commercially viable. To facilitate this, we prepare public transport contracts as well as prepare and create operational service timetables for the various routes. We are also responsible for arranging **education transport contracts** (including a seat purchasing scheme) in order to provide free transport for eligible pupils.

In areas where a conventional transport provision is not available, or for our residents who are unable to, or find it difficult to use conventional public transport, we also consider opportunities for **community transport** e.g. use of electric vehicle in the Nebo and Nasareth area to transport passengers to meet the bus in Penygroes.



## Bus Reform Programme

This project aims to make wider improvements to the network across Wales by the end of March 2021. Welsh Government has commissioned consultants to deliver this work. The aim is to stabilise the network, increase the number of passengers using the bus service to encourage a modal shift and a change in travel behaviour. They will design a new network in January 2021. No reference has been made to additional funding to address these changes. Transport for Wales will manage the network.



## Climate Change

In accordance with the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-2023 in response to climate change, we have secured £3.6m from Welsh Government to purchase 6 electric buses that will operate between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Caernarfon and Blaenau Ffestiniog and Llandudno from September 2021. This is in line with the Welsh Government's wish for public buses and taxis to be carbon neutral by 2028.

**The purpose of the road safety service is to try and reduce injuries and accidents on our roads by undertaking appropriate educational, training and publicity initiatives**

We satisfy this purpose by delivering the following aspects:

- safe cycling training (primary)
- training to cross the main road safely (primary)
- walking to school campaigns (primary and secondary)
- Pass Plus Cymru training (young drivers)
- vehicle management (young drivers)
- 'byw yn iach - gyrru'n iach' (older drivers)
- joint campaigns with others on aspects such as drink driving, speeding, seat belts, baby seats and mobile phones (adults).

Concerns were raised about road safety outside Penygroes primary and secondary schools serving the Nantlle Valley area. A new route has been opened which enables pupils at Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle and Ysgol Bro Lleu, Penygroes to walk to school avoiding busy sections of the main road. Work is also underway to improve parking and bus provision at peak times, and we hope to create a new car park in the area.

Similarly, concerns were raised about road safety outside some of the schools in Caernarfon. A scheme is now underway to improve the safety of road users in the vicinity of Ysgol y Gelli, Ysgol Syr Huw Owen and Arfon Byw'n Iach Centre. This scheme will include traffic calming measures, an extension to a car park, provision for taxis and a new footpath.

## Countryside and Access Service

### Countryside Service

**The purpose of the service is to look after the Gwynedd path network, the beauty of the landscape and nature on land and sea.**

We managed to proceed with some of the operational areas identified in the Ffordd Gwynedd Review of the Service in 2019, and the work will continue in 2021/22.

## **Biodiversity and the Llŷn AONB**

We ensure that we comply with the Council's duties to protect our Biodiversity in Gwynedd, by giving specialist advice on planning applications, developments and enquiries.

Grants available via the **Local Nature Partnership** have enabled us to support and stimulate work that improves nature locally across the county. Their projects for 2021/22 include:

- Creating a community orchard and destroy non-native plants to improve the corridors for pollinators in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area
- In Pwllheli, the local partnership that includes the Town Council and Ysgol Glan y Môr are involved to improve habitat and biodiversity links in a local nature reserve and raise awareness about the area amongst local residents
- Supporting local organisations to manage land near Trem yr Wyddfa, Penygroes for the benefit of nature and as a community resource.

The Department is responsible for coordinating the work of managing a designated European site for marine habitats and species of European importance in the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation. The department also protects and seeks to manage the quality of the **Llŷn Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB) in accordance with protocol. The AONB Management Plan is operated by the Council and other organisations.

The **Gwynedd rights of way network** is approximately 3,800km long. Priority is given to maintaining those paths that give recreational and active travel opportunities within reach of communities. The Department is also responsible for maintaining and developing the national Coastal Path, which is approximately 300km long in Gwynedd. We deal with applications to divert and create paths and maintain and update the definitive map, which shows the county's rights of way network.

A grant programme to improve access has allowed improvements to paths across the county including the Buan path between Llanelltyd and Dolgellau that had eroded badly. The path can now be used by the whole community.

A number of users of Lôn Eifion and Lôn Las Menai were concerned that it was not possible to adhere to social distancing guidance due to narrow sections of the path. Improvements will be implemented in 2021/22 to widen the paths and make the entrances more convenient for all to use.

Following local demand to complete the cycle route between Tywyn and Aberdyfi, which is already one of the Council's priorities, the Department has failed to find grant funding from the Welsh Government to enable us to take the work forward. We will continue to seek adequate funding to complete this important Active Travel link.

There was also a demand to build a multi-use route between Pwllheli and Llanbedrog that would enable users to have easy access along the south coast of the Llŷn Peninsula. Legal work is underway to seek cycling and riding rights on the route to expand our Active Travel network, and this work will be addressed in 2021/22.

We will also continue to work towards creating fit-for-purpose coastal routes between Tal y Bont, Bangor and Porth Penrhyn, and also between Dinas Dinlle and Trefor during 2021/2022.

## **Business Service**

**The purpose of this service is to support other services within the department to deliver.**

Our work includes contract management, finance and income; managing the development and effective operation of information technology systems; integration of tendering and procurement provision, land charges and providing a support and administrative assistance for the different services.

We prepare, implement and manage a large number of the Department's contracts; monitor progress and performance of providers and contractors in terms of agreements, contracts and finance of services; design of operational systems and support procedures of the Department in cost-effective ways and prepare and present work papers regarding savings, changes to the staffing organisation and fees and charges.

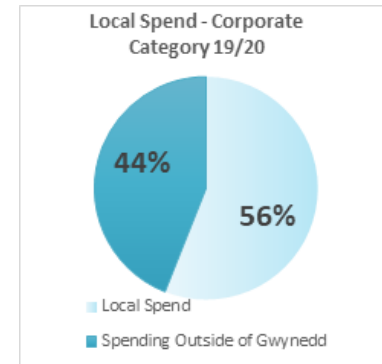
We need to manage the development and implementation of information technology systems, design the operational systems and the procedures for all the services that are used across the Department in cost-effective ways, which will lead to more effective and efficient work practices.

## Corporate Category Management

**The purpose of the Service is to collaborate and support services within the Council to spend public funds in a strategic and correct manner.**

Category management provides a deeper understanding of the market, products, suppliers and the supply chain to develop cross-departmental strategic category plans.

**Value for money** - In the year 2019/20, £165,000 was saved and another £78,000 was identified as possible savings, together with an additional non-financial value for each corporate contract set during the year. In 2020/21, despite the redeployment of staff and being responsible for PPE and quality cleaning goods for the first six months, it was possible to save £58,000 with an additional £23,000 identified between April and November.



**Keeping the Benefits Local** - Through early engagement with the local market and joint working with Business Wales, who provide advice and support to prepare a proposal, there was an increase in local expenditure of 1% compared to 2018/19. The team's effort in 2019/20 continues to improve the local percentage, and between April and November **2020**, local expenditure has increased again by 1%. As well as the increase in direct spend with the local market, we encourage suppliers to increase their local spend within their supply chains.

**For the rest of 2020/21** the programmers of further strategic development plans as well as providing practical support will implement these plans. Where possible special focus will be given to joint-development and implementing social value procurement practices to enable fair play for small and medium-sized businesses.

This department's day-to-day work contributes towards the Gwynedd Well-being Objectives, ensuring that residents can:

Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives

Live in quality homes within their communities

Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment